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VM

SUBJECT: TRAFFICKING IN PERSONS IN THE MEKONG: KIEN GIANG PROVINCE

REF: 05 HCMC 1299

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¶1. (U) Summary: Kien Giang Province is reportedly a source of trafficked women and children, particularly for the sex trade in Cambodia. The provincial Women's Union is spearheading anti-trafficking efforts working with the International Office of Migration on an awareness campaign to counsel potential victims and assist actual victims to reintegrate into the community. Kien Giang's openness to cooperation with international NGOs is a model. Throughout the Mekong, the fight against traffickers is carried out largely by provincial level officials with Womens' Unions often in the lead. End Summary.

Background

¶2. (U) Poor agricultural villages in the Mekong Delta have been the primary source of brides marrying Taiwanese (at a rate of 4,000 per year - Reftel) and are also the hunting ground for traffickers. According to IOM's 2005 data, 700 women and children were documented as trafficked to Cambodia. IOM believes 22,000 Vietnamese women work in the sex industry in Cambodia, though the vast majority appears to have migrated voluntarily in search of higher income.

Recognition of a Problem

¶3. (U) During an April 5 visit to Kien Giang province, the Consul General met with the provincial Women's Union to review provincial efforts to combat trafficking in persons. Chairwoman Nguyen Viet Nu said that the Women's Union has focused efforts on assisting vulnerable women in the villages along the province's 56 kilometer border with Cambodia and in the fishing communities. Aided with a USD 15,000 grant from the International Office of Migration (IOM), the union has implemented an awareness campaign highlighting the dangers of trafficking. The campaign has incorporated a telephone hotline that counsels callers on risks of irregular migration, and offers advice on alternative vocations and training opportunities.

¶4. (SBU) Nu added that recently, four women who were trafficked to Malaysia through Cambodia and Ho Chi Minh City were repatriated back to Kien Giang following IOM and the Women's Union joint intervention in Kuala Lumpur. The women reported that they had been lured to Ho Chi Minh City with the promise of lucrative jobs, then later sold to brothels in Cambodia, where they were further trafficked to Malaysia. Upon return they were given medical treatment by IOM staff and counseled by the Women's Union to facilitate their reintegration back into Kien

Giang.

¶5. (SBU) Madame Nu said that the Women's Union coordinates counter-trafficking activities in Kien Giang with local police. The two sides routinely share information. Reports from border patrol units are often relayed to the union directly from the field. In turn, the women's union has provided provincial police authorities with actionable information from its counseling sessions with vulnerable or reintegrated women.

¶6. (SBU) Madame Nu said that she is concerned with the "excessive" number of Vietnamese brides immigrating to Taiwan, which she considered to be "an abnormal trend in the province." According to women's union data, in 2004, some 500 Kien Giang women married Taiwanese men, 300 in 2005, and 42 during the first quarter of 2006. While not necessarily victims of trafficking, the Chairwoman was concerned that individuals or organized syndicates maybe exploiting some of these women once in Taiwan. However, she did not mention any specific cases of trafficked brides to Taiwan that had come to her attention.

Open to International Cooperation

¶7. (SBU) Chairwoman Nu was very positive about her relationship with IOM. She added that it is the responsibility of the union to work with international NGOs to spotlight TIP issues. She hopes to build on her partnership with IOM to tackle poverty the root cause of trafficking in the provinces well as to raise awareness among the vulnerable populations, and to enhance social services. The Chairwoman noted that cooperation between provincial authorities and foreign entities in Kien Giang was expanding and that for the first time in the province's history a foreigner, Mark Estes, Project Director of Habitat For Humanity International (HFHI), was awarded a certificate of merit by Kien Giang provincial authorities for his NGO's contributions to women's issues.

¶8. Comment: The discussion with the Kien Giang Women's Union

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Chief illustrates the increasing awareness and concern about TIP issues in the Mekong Delta. This fact is fundamental as it is in the provinces that national policy must be translated into local action against TIP. The discussion with Madame Nu also highlights the opportunities for increased international collaboration to combat TIP in the Mekong Delta as well as the need for additional resources to assist well-meaning provincial staff. End Comment.
WINNICK